

DAVID GRAVES HOUSE
County Highway 40
Burkville vicinity
Lowndes County
Alabama

HABS No. A1-885

HABS
ALA
42-BURK.V
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Southeast Region
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DAVID GRAVES HOUSE HABS NO. AL-885

Location: The Graves house is located on the north side of County Highway 40, 500 meters west of County Highway 37 in Lowndes County, Alabama.

Present Owner: General Electric - Montgomery Project
Lowndes County Road 40, Route 1, Box 9-D
Burkville, Alabama 36725

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Most Recent Use: Residence

Significance: The Graves house is a one-story frame structure built ca. 1825 in northeast Lowndes County. It is one of the earliest homes constructed in the county and was the center of a large antebellum plantation. The Graves family were prominent both in agriculture and politics. Although altered, the Graves house still exhibits significant architectural characteristics.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1825. David Graves received a land patent to this property in 1818 and he is listed as a resident of this area in 1820. A descendant of the Graves family, Nicholas Holmes has stated that David Graves built the house soon after his arrival in the early 1820s. The interior Federal woodwork and design support this date of construction.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The chain of ownership for all properties in the Burkville Multiple Resource Area is incomplete due to incomplete county records. The following is the most complete chronological progression possible according to identifiable deed and will records. Reference is to the Clerk's office in the Lowndes County Courthouse in Hayneville, Alabama.

- 1818 Land patent granted to David Graves for eighty acres recorded October 29, 1818.
- 1834 Land patent 2328, Vol. 135, page 503, recorded July 8, 1834.
This patent is for an additional 147 acres in Lowndes County.
- 1881 Deed September 13, 1881, Book M, page 428.
Various Graves heirs
to
Clara Graves
- 1891 Deed, Book Q, page 301
Clara Graves
to
A. L. Whetstone
- 1891 Deed December 1, 1891, Book Q, page 443
A. L. Whetstone
to
Thomas Armstrong
- ca.1900 Property passes to E. W. Robinson from Thomas Armstrong in unlocated transaction.
- ca.1905 Property passes to George Robinson through will of E. W. Robinson. Date of transfer not recorded.
- 1946 Upon death of George Robinson property passes to heir Marlow Reese in unrecorded transfer.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known
5. Original plans and construction: None located
6. Alterations and additions: The house has been substantially altered from its original appearance. Changes include the addition of a brick veneer; a front porch; and rear kitchen, bathroom, family room, porch, and carport.

B. Historical Context:

In 1818 David Graves and his father William Graves received land patents from the Federal government and moved to Alabama. This part of Alabama was then in western Montgomery County and the Graves family is mentioned as being pioneer settlers of the area. William Graves was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and was selected for various offices such as Justice of the

Peace. In 1821 Graves was appointed to a committee which was to select a site for the Montgomery County Courthouse. In 1822 an election precinct was established at the Graves home and his son David was elected as a tax collector for the county. During these years the Graves family increased their land holdings and built the one-story house which remains extant.

In 1830 the western part of Montgomery County was partitioned off to become part of Lowndes County. The 1830 Lowndes County census lists David Graves and a family of 13 occupying land in the northeast part of the county. A second source states that this property consisted of 360 acres. Between 1834 and 1842 a post office for Graves Landing is listed on the Alabama River north of the Graves home to serve the surrounding rural community. Both William Graves Sr. and his son David died in 1836 and an inventory of their estate shows they were owed in excess of \$10,000. David's brother William Jr. and son Peyton assumed control of the Graves property and continued to increase the size of the plantation.

By 1850 several descendants of William Graves Sr. had become prominent planters. William Graves Jr. died in 1854 and his estate was listed as worth over \$33,000 and containing 1,072 acres. Other family members such as Peyton Graves and Y. W. Graves are listed as owning substantial acreage and large numbers of slaves. While the exact occupants of the Graves home is uncertain it is believed that Peyton Graves resided there before the Civil War. In addition to his prominence as a planter, Peyton Graves was also a successful lawyer and politician and in 1863 he was elected to the state legislature from Lowndes County. His brother-in-law, Thomas Judge, was also a prominent lawyer serving in the Alabama Senate and Supreme Court.

The Civil War appears to have had a significant influence on the Graves plantation. Most members of the family left the area to settle in Lowndesboro and Montgomery. Peyton Graves moved to Montgomery but retained ownership of part of the plantation. An 1873 Alabama newspaper mentions his ownership of property in Lowndes County and his advanced methods of cotton cultivation. It is unknown which family member resided in the house after the Civil War. Clara Graves owned the property until 1891 and the last interment in the family cemetery occurred in 1884. After 1900 the house was purchased by Eli Robinson and occupied by his son George who lived there with his family. The Robinsons owned the house until the 1940s although the progression of ownership is not clear. In past years the house has been altered and used by the owner as rental property.

Although the Graves family left the area in the late 19th century, their influence continued to be felt in later years. In 1928 a marker signifying William Graves' participation in the Revolutionary War was placed in nearby Manac by the county chapter of the D. A. R. The Graves family continued to be active in politics and the grandson of Peyton Graves, Bibb Graves, served two terms as governor of Alabama between 1927 and 1939.

Southeast of the Graves house across Highway 40 is the Graves family cemetery which contains twenty marked graves. The cemetery was in use between 1832 and 1884 and contains members of the Graves and allied families. Among those buried in the cemetery are: William Graves Sr. and his wife Sarah; David Graves and six of his children; and various members of the Hinkle, Fagan, and Judge families.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Graves House is an excellent example of an early evolutionary plantation house form without the fully developed central house plan. One and one half stories in height, this early 18th century structure has been obscured behind a mid-20th century brick veneer.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior is in good condition, while the interior varies from fair to poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original house is 39'-6" wide and 30'-4" deep. To this was added, in a series of additions, a section 50'-8" wide and 20'-8" deep.
2. Foundations: Brick piers with hand hewn sills and joists.
3. Walls: Brick veneer over the original clapboard siding. The brick is set in a common bond.
4. Structural system, framing: Hand hewn heavy timber frame, post and beam construction with diagonal corner bracing. Members are joined by mortise and tenon with wood pegs. Structural elements are 4" x 4" and larger.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The front (south) porch is a 20th century addition, nearly the full width of the house. It has a concrete slab floor set on a concrete block perimeter foundation. The shed roof is supported by six square pillars and a large box beam on the three open sides of the porch. The underside of the beam is panelled and the porch ceiling consists of tongue and groove boards.
6. Chimneys: Only one of the original four chimneys still exists (southwest room). It has been rebuilt or covered with a matching brick veneer that also follows the original corbel base, shoulder, and cap design of regional chimneys.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The current front door is a six panel single leaf door added in the 20th century, approximating in design the original interior doors. It replaces double doors for which both hinge and floor and lintel latch indications still exist. This door is protected by a matching six panel louvered outer door. Above this door is a five light transom. Other original exterior (now interior) doors include the double door of the rear hall and a side door (east) covered by the brick veneer. (See interior descriptions for these).

Other exterior doors include a side door to the rear family room, which is a 12 light wood door, and an aluminum glass and screen door to the rear porch off the carport.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Window types vary around the house. In the northwest room of the original section they are 9-over-9 light double-hung sash, while they are six-over-six light double-hung sash on the east side, southwest room, and second floor. Windows in the later additions are 2-over-2 horizontal light double-hung sash. The frames are set into the brick veneer with a soldier course lintel and a sailor course sill.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The main house has an asphalt shingle gable roof while the shed roofs over the front porch and rear additions have "10V" sheet metal.

- b. Cornice, eaves: The slight projecting box eave of the main roof has been modified with the porch and rear additions. The roof projects about 14" at the gable ends with narrow fascia board trim.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There is one rear gable with clapboard siding and a lowered vent in the rear (north) side of the main house roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The original portion of the house was a four room partial central hall plan with the hall on the north side of the house. This was most likely the original front entrance. To this plan has been added a center hall on the south side (now main entrance) of the house. A kitchen-bathroom-family room has been added across the north (now rear) side of the house.
- b. Second floor: This floor consists of two rooms, the east and smaller of which is above the original east pair of rooms, while the west and larger is over the west pair of rooms and central hall.

2. Stairways: The house has a single stairway consisting of a straight run of 16 risers (9-1/2") and 15 treads (11"). At the base of the stair is a turned newel with paired turned spindles on each tread. The handrail is a relatively flat rectangular shape. The railings at the second floor have chamfered newels, square spindles, and an octagonal railing.

3. Flooring: Original house section: Wood plank, 6" wide in all rooms. This has been covered with 2-1/2" tongue-and-groove wood in the southeast room.

Rear Addition: Linoleum is used to finish the floors in all rooms of the rear addition, with the exception of the northeast porch which has a concrete floor.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original house section: The rear central hall has a wainscot above which are flush wood planks and a wood plank ceiling. Beaded board walls (3-1/4") above the wainscots and on the

ceiling is found in southwest room. Beaded board ceilings are also found in the center hall closet and front entrance hall. The remaining walls and ceilings in this portion of the house have been refinished with drywall.

Rear Addition: The kitchen, hall, and bathroom walls and ceilings have been finished with dry wall. Ceramic tile has been used on the lower portion of the bathroom walls and imitation tile on masonite and plastic tiles have been used on the lower portions of the kitchen walls. The large family room has wood panelling (4' x 8') and an acoustic tile ceiling. (The eastern portion of the family room is a later addition to this room.) The rear porch has one wood panel wall and three window walls as well as an exposed plank and 2" x 4" rafter ceiling.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Original doors found in the original section of the house are six panel, are 3'-0-3/4" x 6'-9" and have their original surround trim consisting of a 4" wide flat board and outer moulding band. One of these, originally an exterior door on the east side of the house, now in the closet framed into the southeast room, still exists although this opening has been covered by the later exterior brick veneer. The original double doors in the rear (north) center hall consist of 2' wide leafs and have been altered to include large glass panes. Above this door is a five pane transom. Other later doors in the house are two and four panel designs.

b. Windows: The windows of the original house vary in size. Those on the east and west walls are 2'-4-1/2" x either 5'-4-1/2" or 5'-6" while those on the south wall are 2'-10" x 6'-7". The windows on the south wall were probably altered during the most recent remodeling. The window trim of the later windows is 4" wide and is related in design to the original door trim.

6. Decorative features and trim: In the original house all rooms have panelled wainscot. The original wainscot utilized flush plank panels, while later additions used beaded boards. Two original mantles, Federal in design, exist in the southwest and southeast rooms, the latter of which has an altered top shelf.

7. Hardware: Doors have basic flat hinges and a few still have lockboxes. Some shutter hardware remains on the exterior window frames.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Gas heaters.
 - b. Lighting: Wiring for ceiling lights and wall receptacles.
 - c. Plumbing: Fully plumbed for kitchen and bathroom.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The principal elevation faces south towards County Highway 40. The house is set back approximately 25 meters and is approached by a lateral driveway to the east that extends to the rear carport.
2. Historic landscape design: No formal historic planting design is visible based on the existing planting around the house. Young trees and shrubs are mixed in with the more mature growth.
3. Outbuildings: A small shed is located to the northeast of the house, while the family cemetery is to the southeast, across Highway 40.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: None located
- B. Early Views: None located
- C. Interviews:

Holmes, Nicholas. Mobile, Alabama. September 20, 1983.

Shreiner, Mrs. Charles. Burkville, Alabama. August 19, 1983.

Wynn, Mrs. Mary. Hayneville, Alabama. August 20, 1983.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Alabama State Census 1855. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Graves Papers. Manuscripts on file at the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

"Lowndes County Cemetery Records". Undated manuscript on file, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Lowndes County Deed, Inventory, Marriage, Minute and Will Records 1830-1983. Lowndes County Courthouse, Hayneville, Alabama.

"Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter", Vol. 1-2. Hayneville, Alabama: Private Printing, 1967-1969.

"Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter", Vol. 8-10. Ft. Deposit, Alabama: Private Printing, 1975-1977.

United States Census Records, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Blue, Matthew. History of Montgomery, Alabama. Montgomery: T. C. Bingham and Company, 1878 pp. 8-44.

Brewer, Willis. Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men. from 1540 to 1872. Republished, 1964, by Wilo Publishing Company of Tuscaloosa. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Russell, Mildred Brewer. Lowndes Courthouse. Montgomery: The Paragon Press, 1951. pp. 5-117.

E. Supplemental Material: Additional historical/genealogical information on file with The Ehrenkrantz Group/Building Conservation Technology, Inc., Nashville, Tn.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was conducted by The Ehrenkrantz Group/ Building Conservation Technology, Inc., of Nashville, Tennessee under contract from Environmental Research and Technology, Inc. for General Electric - Montgomery Project, Burkville, Alabama.

Project personnel included Michael Emrick, Project Architect (project coordination, architectural data); James Thompson, Architect (measured drawings and sketch plans); Philip Thomason, project historian; and Barry Starkey, photographer. Agency involvement included the Mobile District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service.